

Building Effective Sustainable State Advocacy Legislative and Advocacy Committee

Although individuals often make great strides in advocacy for gifted education, the most effective way to advance an issue is through a network or committee of dedicated advocates.

Tips for Building an Advocacy Committee:

- Operates as part of the state affiliate, when possible
- Is chaired by an individual with effective advocacy experience
- Is diverse in as many ways as possible including racial/ethnic, regional representation, political, generational, gender, age, roles in gifted including parents, etc.
- Is outcome oriented with built in accountability
- Needs to report and provide appropriate call-to-action tasks to a larger audience (affiliate group, state gifted teachers, NAGC, etc.)
- Keeps good records of contact information for members, decision-makers, and other key people in their state
- Meets regularly throughout the year, is proactive, and not just in reactive, crisis mode
- Leadership should provide pathways for committee members to become leaders
- Stagnate leadership often produces a stagnate network of advocates

Providing Guidance for Group Advocacy:

- 1) Identify your issue/s
 - a. Know your facts – gather as much information as possible
 - b. Be clear and sincere
 - c. Be succinct
 - d. Be honest; admit when you don't know something and then find out and reconnect with what you have learned
 - e. When appropriate, have impactful illustrative stories to tell

- 2) Organize communication
 - a. Build appropriate data bases of people, policies, etc.
 - b. Create sample "messages" or talking points with helpful background information
 - c. Decide who would/could serve as the best advocate for the situation. Consider diversity and the audience when selecting the advocate.
 - d. Assign specific advocates to each important decision maker and encourage regular communication.
 - e. Keep records of contacts and advocacy work for future reference

- 3) Putting the communication plan in motion
 - a. Share appropriate information with the assigned advocate including messaging and talking points
 - b. Advocates make contact with their assigned decision maker to provide information to their assigned person with a personal contact (most effective one-on-one, but emails, letters, newsletters, etc. can be appropriate)
 - c. Advocate reports back to advocacy committee and/or committee chair
 - d. Need some form of dissemination to the broader group

- 4) Build ongoing relationships with decision makers
 - a. Attend open forums and meetings and make personal contact at events when possible
 - b. Know how to best reach decision makers
 - c. Always express thankfulness for their time
 - d. Always identify your name, organization, and voting district when appropriate
 - e. Make sure that decision makers know how to get in contact with you (multiple contact options when possible)